



ILLAWARRA BIRD OBSERVERS CLUB

INCLUDING

IBOC NATURE GROUP



Issue No 501

ILLAWARRA BIRD OBSERVER CLUB INC NEWSLETTER

May 2025

AUSTRALIAN WOOD DUCK

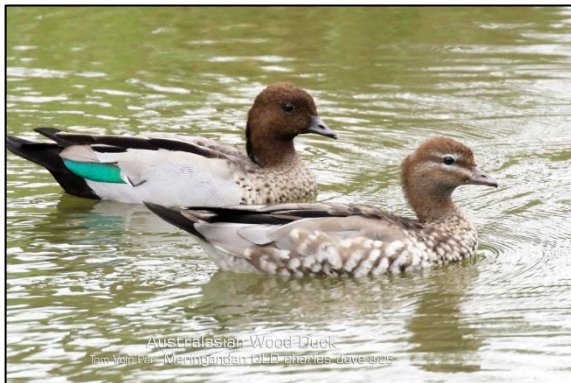
Scientific Name: [Chenonetta jubata](#)

Featured bird groups: [Water birds](#)

Atlas Number: 202

Description

The Australian Wood Duck is a medium-sized 'goose-like' duck with a dark brown head and a pale grey body with two black stripes along the back. Males have the darker head and a small dark mane, with a speckled brown-grey breast and a black lower belly and undertail. The females have a paler head with two white stripes, above and below the eye, a speckled breast and flanks, with a white lower belly and undertail. In flight, the wings are pale grey above, contrasting with black wingtips, and have a noticeable white bar on the underside (the secondaries). They walk easily on land and may be seen perching on logs and in trees.



Australian Wood Duck (Charles Dove)

Similar species:

The Australian Wood Duck can be distinguished from pygmy geese, *Nettapus* spp, which are smaller, have bold white face markings and are usually seen on water. Whistling ducks, *Dendrocygna* spp, have longer legs and necks, larger more duck-like bills and tend to walk more upright. When flying, the Australian Wood Duck is the only duck with white secondary feathers and dark wingtips.

Distribution:

The Australian Wood Duck is widespread in Australia, including Tasmania.

Habitat:

The Australian Wood Duck is found in grasslands, open woodlands, wetlands, flooded pastures and along the coast in inlets and bays. It is also common on farmland with dams, as well as around rice fields, sewage ponds

and in urban parks. It will often be found around deeper lakes that may be unsuitable for other waterbirds' foraging, as it prefers to forage on land.

Feeding:

The Australian Wood Duck eats grasses, clover and other herbs, and occasionally, insects. It is rarely seen on open water, preferring to forage by dabbling in shallow water, or in grasslands and crops.

Breeding:

The Australian Wood Duck forms monogamous breeding pairs that stay together year-round. It nests in tree holes, above or near water, often re-using the same site. Both parents feed young and young birds remain with them up to a month after fledging.

Text courtesy:

[Australian Wood Duck](#) | [BIRDS in BACKYARDS](#)



'ONE GOOD TERN
DESERVES ANOTHER'

Founded in 1977

Club's Aim:

To join together people with a common interest who wish to further their knowledge and enjoyment of the Birds and General Nature around them.

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CLUB MEETING

Monday, 12th May 2025, commencing at 7.30pm

"How to start a zoo" is the title of the talk at our May meeting.

The speaker is Jamberoo local **David Butcher**, a retired veterinarian and the founding curator of the famous Taronga Western Plains Zoo in Dubbo, which first opened in February 1977.

It was the first zoo in Australia to be constructed on the open range principle and the first zoo to be built in Australia in 60 years.

From 1976 David was in charge of transforming an old army camp into 300 hectares of woodland and irrigated grasslands.

When it opened, the zoo had 35 different animals from six countries. It was the beginning of massive changes in zoo practice, with fences replaced by concealed moats giving the visitor the impression of being in the wild.

"It was fascinating to build something like that," David says. "The whole object was to display animals in a way where people, if they partly closed their eyes, could imagine they were in Africa or Asia.

"All the enclosures really took into account the behaviour of the animals. We had thought that it should also be as much a living thing as the animals it contained, so it developed organically, in that it could be easily changed and modified over time.

"Most people will never see these types of animals in the wild and to be able to imagine that, to consider their ecosystems, was really important from an educational point of view."

David takes us on an entertaining journey through the trials and tribulations -- but also the joys and laughter -- of building and developing the world-famous zoo.

David is a former chief executive of the World Wildlife Fund Australia, Greening Australia and the RSPCA (NSW).

Please bring a plate of goodies for supper after the meeting.

MIDWEEK WALK

Wednesday 14th May 2025, starts at 9.00am

Croome Road Sporting Complex – John O'Dwyer Oval

Leaders Bill & Joan Zealey

Meet at 9.00 am in the carpark by the John O'Dwyer oval. Coming from either north or south, take the exit off the M1 marked "Albion Park, Jamberoo, Moss Vale". From the north, turn left at the lights into Tongarra Rd. From the south, turn right at the lights into Tongarra Rd. Proceed east along Tongarra Rd towards Albion Park Rail and pass under the M1 bridge. 800m further on, turn right into Croome Rd. On the corner there is a blue sign "Croome Regional Sporting Complex". After 500m turn right into the Sporting Complex gate and follow the road 600m to the carpark at the running track/playing field.

We will walk a short way south along the creek before doing the usual loop from the car park and have morning tea back at the cars.

The area includes a remnant piece of bushland in addition to the sporting fields, providing a variety of habitats. Hopefully we will get a good selection of birds. Be sure to bring plenty of insect repellent as there are plenty of mossies and sunscreen.

In the event of inclement weather telephone Bill: 0414 747 644



MONTHLY OUTING

Saturday 17th May 2025, starts at 9.30am

Leaders Lyndall & Terry Dawson

Echo Point, Morton National Park.

Starting from the village of Bundanoon, take Church St and The Gullies Rd east about 4km toward to the entrance to Morton NP. **Meet at 9.30am at Gambells Rest** (Info, toilets) on the left about 50m past the park entrance (NOT the Gambells Rest Campground on the right). It is not necessary to pay park entrance fees for day-trippers, only campers.

Link for Gambells Rest: <https://maps.app.goo.gl/Z8hq9H5ezkHBFQmCA>

From there we will proceed to **Echo Point Picnic Ground** to park. There is shelter and toilets at the picnic ground. Bring morning tea and lunch.

For further information, or in case of inclement weather please contact, **Lyndall & Terry Dawson, Phone 0408 603 259.**

NEXT COMMITTEE MEETING

Monday 21st July 2025 @ 2pm – To be held at the home of Peter Fackender, 35 Kaylaur Cres, Albion Park Rail.

NEWSLETTER

DEADLINE is COB Monday 26th May 2025. Please send contributions to newsletteriboc@gmail.com or Chris. Cartledge PO Box 8 Keiraville NSW 2500. In your email, please include a caption for each picture submitted. *Feedback on the newsletter welcomed!*

Contributors this month Pam Hazelwood, Nic Van Oudtshoorn, Ken Brown, Peter Salvair, Lyndall Dawson, Bill & Joan Zealey, and Darryl Goldrick. *Thanks to all! – Editor*

REPORTS

IBOC Club Meeting 14th April 2025

"Now for Something Completely Different"

By Bill Zealey

In April, Bill stepped in at short notice to talk about his fascination with some of the similarities between our planet and one of our nearest neighbours - Mars.

He presented a planetary detective story.

As one of the Solar System's inner, rocky planets, Mars shares a common evolutionary history with the Earth. There is evidence for icecaps, rivers, volcanoes and deserts, similar to those seen today on Earth. Where terrestrial features have been eroded by wind, rain and plate tectonics, those on Mars have to some extent been frozen in time due to its lost atmosphere and low gravity. Mars therefore presents an almost pristine record of the events that formed the features we see today.

Since the first successful mission to Mars in 1965, numerous flybys, orbiters and landers have significantly enhanced our understanding of the planet. Unexpectedly, the northern and southern hemispheres of Mars are completely different. The southern hemisphere is a heavily cratered, volcanic region - The northern is composed of smooth lava plains with few craters. Between them lies an abrupt

five km dichotomy or step, suggesting that northern plains were once a shallow ocean.

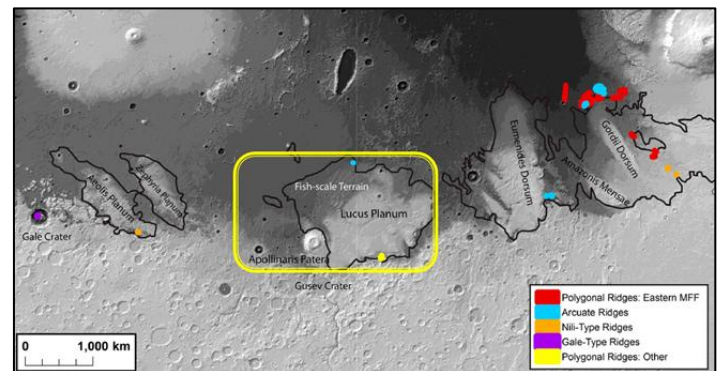


Figure 1 - The Elysium Plains, The Medusa Fossae Formation and the Martian Dichotomy

Bill's particular interest is the unique, smooth ridges and plateaus of Lucus Planum that run parallel to the dichotomy. These are part of the Medusa Fossae Formation [MFF], a fairly recent formation that rises from the lava plains in the north to the heights of the southern highlands. The ridges almost appear plastic and show virtually no surface features except where they are eroding at their edges to reveal gravel like material. The few impact craters that exist imply that the surface was "moist" producing splat-like outer ejecta rings or ghost craters.

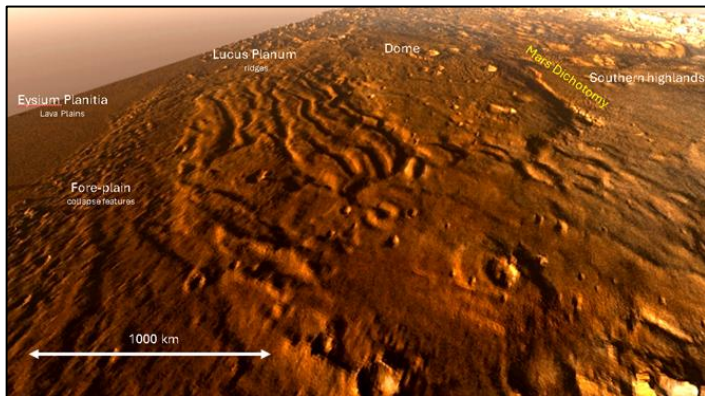


Figure 2 - The Ridges of Lucus Planum

In the north, the flat, low fore-plain has been over-run by recent lava flows. As the thin crust collapsed underlying ices ablated cracks, fissures and steplike features formed.

To the west major impacts have produced blast waves that have swept the surface, forming cliffs and collapse features at the edge of the MFF. To complicate matters the MFF butts up in the south and west to the Apollinaris Mons volcano. The proximity of Apollinaris Mons to the nearby MFF deposits suggests it may have been the source of widespread, airborne pyroclastic deposits.

The fact that the Medusa Fossae Formation, although rising to meet the dichotomy, is separated from it by a 2000m deep cleft implies that it has been superposed on the region fairly recently. The outstanding questions remain.

- what processes formed the smooth ridges and are they still forming?
- what is eroding the MFF ridges?
- what triggered the collapse features?

This is most definitely a “work in progress”. It relies on the fact that NASA and ESO continue to make all planetary observations available on the internet through the University of Arizona’s Mars site. Anyone can access images of Mars [and other planets] down to a few tens of centimetres using a simple map-based app. All you need is an ability to relate what you have seen in your travels to a completely alien planet! Pleasant Dreams.

Midweek Walk

Wednesday 16th April 2025

Blackbutt Forest Reserve

By Bill & Joan Zealey

On a pleasant, cool morning a handful of us decided to do the walk in the opposite way to usual. Down the steep track we would normally have to trudge up at the end of the morning’s walk. The roosting bats were being fairly rowdy and with competition from cockatoos it was hard to hear other birds.

On entering the woodland, we encountered a mixed flock of small birds including a Golden Whistler, thornbills, silvereyes, gerygones and a monarch. We wound down the slope towards the dam, which had been rebuilt since earlier walks and was now considerably smaller. Here we found coots, swamphens and a lone Great Egret, which



A small but active group (Bill Zealey)

kept one pace ahead of us as we re-entered the scrub. Rather than climbing back to the main track by way of a steep grassy slope we followed a narrow track that was less steep. Regaining the main track, we found another small party of gerygones and a Horsfield’s Bronze-Cuckoo. The old trees along the track provided many nesting holes which the Sulphur-crested Cockatoos were busily investigating. A few Crimson Rosellas keep in the background.

Not a bad morning’s birding.



Great Egret displaying to us (Bill Zealey)

Bird List – 28 Species

Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo	Lewin's Honeyeater
White-throated Needletail	Red Wattlebird
Dusky Moorhen	Spotted Pardalote
Eurasian Coot	Brown Thornbill
Australasian Swamphen	Brown Gerygone
Great Egret	Golden Whistler
Laughing Kookaburra	Grey Butcherbird
Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo	Australian Magpie
Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	Pied Currawong
Australian King-Parrot	Grey Fantail
Crimson Rosella	Black-faced Monarch
Rainbow Lorikeet	Australian Raven
Variiegated Fairywren	Eastern Yellow Robin
Eastern Spinebill	Silvereye

eBird checklist S226237426

Spring Camp – Howlong, 25 October – 1 November 2025

Our next camp will be in Howlong (near Albury) in October this year. The club visited Howlong in October 2013 and saw 159 species in a variety of habitats on both sides of the border.

The details are:

Dates:	Check-in Saturday 25 October 2025, check out Saturday 1 November 2025. But you can stay longer or shorter if you wish.
Park:	Howlong Caravan Park
Address:	55 Hume St, Howlong NSW 2643
Phone:	0427 317 222 (Marie Robinson)
Web site:	http://www.howlongcaravanpark.com.au

The park has a variety of cabin types and for the vans there are powered and unpowered sites. No ensuite sites unfortunately. The park has reserved a total of 10 cabins and 3 powered sites for us and will hold them until the first week of June. Our camp finishes on the weekend before the Melbourne Cup which will be a long weekend for many Victorians, so the park expects to be taking bookings from other people starting at the June long weekend.

When you book, tell them you are from the Illawarra Bird Observers Club. After you book, please send us an email at membershipiboc@gmail.com and tell us what dates and accommodation you have booked.

The options are:

Spa Villa (1 bedroom, Queen bed)	\$150 per night
Double Villa (2 bedrooms, 1xQueen + 1xDouble)	\$180 per night
Family Villa (2 bedrooms, 1xQueen + 2xBunks)	\$180 per night
Park Units (Studio room with 1xQueen + 1xBunk)	\$120 per night
Standard Unit (Studio room with 1xQueen)	\$120 per night
Powered site	\$45 per night

Payment will not be needed until about August.

Ken & Sue Brown

ARTICLES OF INTEREST

The “accidental rediscovery” of the Night Parrot

Below is a short extract from "Night Fever", a story by Nick O'Malley in GoodWeekend February 8, 2025
[Read the full story.](#)

“The last known live Night Parrot to be taken as a specimen was shot in 1912 in WA by a well-digger and drover call Martin Burgoyne, though the remains were later lost. There were no more verified sightings of the parrot for more than a century, and it became the Holy Grail of bird watching, drawing adventures from around the world. In the years that followed Burgoyne made notes of multiple encounters with night parrots across WA, each viewed today as convincing in their detail.

One day in October 1990, the Australian Museum ornithologist Walter Boles was driving along a road

in far western Queensland with colleagues when they pulled over to watch a group of Australian pratincoles, little grey birds also known as roadrunners.

He looked to his feet and there in the dust saw a desiccated carcass. A night parrot. It was the first incontrovertible evidence that the bird had survived since the specimen was shot in 1912 and enough for the museum to claim a \$50,000 reward that had been earlier offered by millionaire adventurer Dick Smith for proof of its life.

(Ecologist, Nick) Leseberg shakes his head in wonder when he speaks of this moment. “Imagine all the things that had to go right for that to happen? The car had to stop in that exact spot. They had to get out of the car. They had to know what they were looking for or looking at. Interest in the bird surged, but again the night parrot disappeared, though the

focus of the search narrowed. Then, in September 2006, a park ranger and former roo shooter called Robert Cupitt, better known as "Shorty", was grading a fence line in the Diamantina National Park when he found a headless parrot that apparently clotheslined itself on the fence. Night parrots were known to fly low. Suspecting it to be one of the elusive birds he'd heard so much about, he delivered it to Paul Neilson, who to this day owns the Tattersalls Hotel in Winton the nearest town. Neilson too, had become something of a night parrot buff. Today the walls for the pub are lined with night parrot pictures and newspaper clippings."

For over a decade Walter Boles was a member of the Illawarra Bird Observers Club before he left to live in Coolah in 2022.

Walter E. Boles is a renowned Australian ornithologist who has made significant contributions to the study of birds, particularly in Australia. He has worked at the Australian Museum since 1975, holding roles such as Scientific Officer in Ornithology and Collection Manager of Birds. His research interests include the evolution, systematics, and biogeography of Australian birds, with a focus on songbirds and fossil avifauna.

Boles has authored numerous papers, articles, and books on Australian birds, including *The Robins and Flycatchers of Australia*. He has also been involved in the discovery and naming of new bird species, such as the Eungella Honeyeater, and has contributed to the study of the earliest known fossil songbirds.

Man sets off on 53-mile walk dressed as a curlew

Grace Wood and Kat Cowan – BBC News, Yorkshire, 21 April 2025



(Matt Trevelyan)

A man is walking 53 miles (85km) in a homemade bird costume to raise awareness and funds for conservation projects. Matt Trevelyan, a farming officer for Nidderdale National Landscape, began the two-day challenge on Saturday and has been walking along the Nidderdale Way.

He crafted the 10ft-long (3m) costume of a Eurasian curlew - Europe's largest wading bird - out of polystyrene and bamboo.

Mr Trevelyan said: "Those who know me well know I was eventually going to build a giant curlew. She's a real beauty. I wanted to represent curlews well because they're such a beautiful bird."

The challenge coincides with World Curlew Day on Monday, which was created by Mary Colwell in 2017 to raise awareness of the dangers curlews face due to habitat loss, land-use changes and climate pressures. [Read the full story.](#)

Bellbirds

by Henry Kendall

By channels of coolness the echoes are calling,
And down the dim gorges I hear the creek falling;
It lives in the mountain, where moss and the sedges
Touch with their beauty the banks and the ledges;
Through brakes of the cedar and sycamore bowers
Struggles the light that is love to the flowers.
And, softer than slumber, and sweeter than singing,
The notes of the bell-birds are running and ringing.

The silver-voiced bell-birds, the darlings of day-time,
They sing in September their songs of the May-time.
When shadows wax strong and the thunder-bolts hurtle,
They hide with their fear in the leaves of the myrtle;
When rain and the sunbeams shine mingled together
They start up like fairies that follow fair weather,
And straightway the hues of their feathers unfolden
Are the green and the purple, the blue and the golden.

October, the maiden of bright yellow tresses,
Loiters for love in these cool wildernesses;
Loiters knee-deep in the grasses to listen,
Where dripping rocks gleam and the leafy pools glisten.
Then is the time when the water-moons splendid
Break with their gold, and are scattered or blended
Over the creeks, till the woodlands have warning
Of songs of the bell-bird and wings of the morning.

Welcome as waters unkissed by the summers
Are the voices of bell-birds to thirsty far-comers.
When fiery December sets foot in the forest,
And the need of the wayfarer presses the sorest,
Pent in the ridges for ever and ever.
The bell-birds direct him to spring and to river,
With ring and with ripple, like runnels whose torrents
Are toned by the pebbles and leaves in the currents.

Often I sit, looking back to a childhood
 Mixt with the sights and the sounds of the wildwood,
 Longing for power and the sweetness to fashion
 Lyrics with beats like the heart-beats of passion –
 Songs interwoven of lights and of laughters
 Borrowed from bell-birds in far forest rafters;
 So I might keep in the city and alleys
 The beauty and strength of the deep mountain
 valleys,
 Charming to slumber the pain of my losses
 With glimpses of creeks and a vision of mosses.

This poem was first published in a work
 entitled "*Leaves from Australian Forests*" by Henry
 Kendall in the year of 1869.



Yellow chested halfwit spotted in Greenland

Q&A (SMH 21 Oct 24)

What are the two small holes located on the top of a bird's beak called: nares, navels or nottles?

LINKS TO ARTICLES OF INTEREST

Drones, AI and one long fence: Kangaroo Island's war on a clawed predator that kills 1.5bn Australian animals a year

Feral cats are a menace to wildlife but South Australia's KI has taken a stand in a bold eradication program that is at a critical point. [Read the full story.](#)

The house that Yasi built: One man's solitary life with the cassowaries

A devastating cyclone helped Kenn Parker build his rainforest home, and now his favourite neighbours are the cassowaries who come to visit with their chicks. [Read the full story.](#)

'Rat on wings': The little bird that won a bravery medal

From pigeons and Morse code to satellites and cyberspace: 100 years of the Royal Australian Corps of Signals. [Read the full story.](#)

Adventurous or aggressive? Fairy-wren song reveals bird's personality

The songs of superb fairy-wrens can indicate the bird's personality, according to new research. Birds with a more exploratory nature were found to have more elements or notes, while aggressive individuals had shorter song bursts. [Read the full story.](#)

79yo bird-lover's solo pilgrimage across the country

Struggling after the death of her husband, Christina Sobey had her health checked and her blue station wagon serviced before travelling west to Australia's oldest and most remote bird research station. [Read the full story.](#)

Birdwatching leaves twitchers flying high while tracking species

Birdwatching is soaring in popularity worldwide, with research studies finding the practice can reduce psychological distress and increase mental wellbeing. [Read the full story.](#)

Warnings after backyard cassowary attack puts senior in hospital

Experts are urging caution after a cassowary exhibiting "bold behaviour" slashed a man's leg in a backyard confrontation. [Read the full story.](#)

Endangered parrot's genetic decline has put it in an 'extinction vortex'

The endangered, Orange-bellied Parrot has lost 62 per cent of its genetic diversity and can only be saved by breeding with another species or editing its genes, a study suggests. [Read the full story.](#)

Thermal tech to protect bilbies and night parrots from feral cats

Cameras, bioacoustic recorders and thermal scopes are being placed in Queensland's Channel Country in a bid to bring the "relentless hunters" under control. [Read the full story.](#)

Giant prehistoric kangaroos preferred to 'chill at home' and didn't like to go out much, scientists say

Fossil teeth show species of protemnodon that roamed Australia between 5m and 40,000 years ago lived and died near Queensland caves. [Read the full story.](#)

The good news stories you might have missed – birdlife Australia

Brighten up your week with 5 good news stories from the world of Australian birds and bird conservation – [read here.](#)

A high-flying visitor – the wondrous far eastern curlew – faces fresh threat in NT wetlands haven

Hundreds of far eastern curlews fly nonstop more than 10,000km every year to [Darwin](#) Harbour from Russia and China. But their southern habitat is under threat from a large industrial development backed by more than \$1bn in federal government funding. [Read the full story.](#)

Endangered Carnaby's black cockatoos, and the teenager building nests for them – video

Eva Czislawski, a student and activist, says Carnaby's black cockatoos used to blacken the sky. 'I can't believe that I won't be able to experience that,' she says. The endemic WA bird is just one of 2,000 Australian species listed as under threat, in what scientists are calling an extinction crisis. [Read the full story.](#)

Massive swarms of bogong moths once resembled rain clouds – then their numbers crashed to earth

The bogong moth was once so abundant it was mistaken for weather. [Read the full story.](#)

Monthly Sightings March/April 2025

Compiled by Darryl Goldrick

SPECIES	Nº	DATE	LOCATION	HABITAT	OBSERVER
Crested Pigeon	11	15-04-25	Wollongong Botanic Garden	viewing platform area	Mike Morphett
Black Swan	1	17-04-25	Lower Farmborough Road, Unanderra.	Flying overhead at night. - calling .	Shane Spence
Black-browed Albatross	1	02-Apr-25	Bellambi	At sea-offshore	Joan Zealey
Shy Albatross	1	02-Apr-25	Bellambi	At sea-offshore	Joan Zealey
Masked Lapwing	1	03-04-25	Thirroul Beach	tideline	Mike Morphett
White-faced Heron	1	24-04-25	Waniora Point	dune vegetation foraging	Mike Morphett
Australian Brush-turkey	9	15-04-25	Wollongong Botanic Garden	playground lawn area	Mike Morphett
Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo	3	21-04-25	Tarrawanna	Flying above creek line	Sue Brown
Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo	2	19-Apr-25	Balgownie	Riparian on Cabbage Tree Creek	Neil McKinlay/Pam Hazlewood
Kelp Gull	1	24-04-25	Bulli & Woonona Beaches	in flight southbound	Mike Morphett
Little Black Cormorant	3	24-04-15	Waniora Point	top of power pole	Mike Morphett
Black-shouldered Kite	1	24-Apr-25	Figtree	Overhead on Freeway	Darryl Goldrick
Black-shouldered Kite	1	23-Apr-25	Dunmore	Overhead	Darryl Goldrick
Brown Goshawk	1	19-04-25	Thirroul	on top of aviary	Mike Morphett
Southern Boobook	1	11-Apr-25	Balgownie	Clothesline	Joan Zealey
Superb Lyrebird	1 calling	24-04-25	Excelsior Mine bushland, Thirroul	Flanagans Creek gully	Mike Morphett
Eastern Spinebill	2	04-06-25	Kiama	Eucalyptus shrub in garden	Anne Cousins
Noisy Friarbird	1	25-04-25	Coast Street, Thirroul	top of eucalypt	Mike Morphett
Grey Butcherbird	1	26-Apr-25	Lake Illawarra South	Yard - early morning chorus	Darryl Goldrick
Grey Butcherbird	2	10-Apr-25	Balgownie	Backyard clothesline.	Christine Steinmann
Grey Fantail	1	03-04-25	Lower Farmborough Road, Unanderra.	Backyard clothesline.	Shane Spence

Email all your bird sightings to Darryl Goldrick [click here](#)

Q & A = nares

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